

CQ REVIEWS:

The Power Station

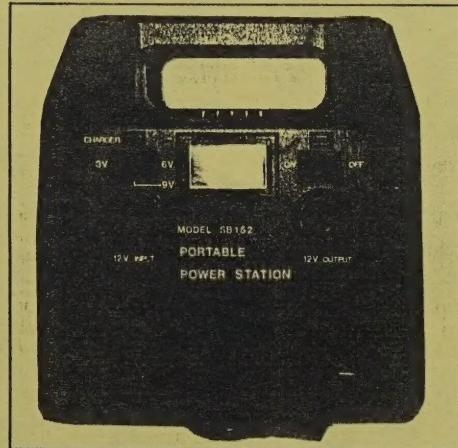
BY ALAN M. DORHOFFER*, K2EEK

To most amateurs the worst possible scenario is to be out of the shack with absolutely no means of electronic communication. Setting those cold sweats aside, the next thing guaranteed to upset us is running out of volts no matter where we are. It isn't so much that we seem to have this problem with control as it is we would like to be able to communicate with our fellow amateur at length no matter where we happen to be. Of course, factor in the possibility of natural disaster, storm-related power outages, and other phenomena, and that casual communication suddenly becomes critical.

With one product, The Ham Contact has come up with a way to allay our anxiety and fear of being without the world's longest power cord with volts attached. The Power Station is really a big name for a small, easily transportable (about 7.5 lbs.) box crammed full of volts and amps. Think about the possibility of staying awake and doing all three days of Dayton, talking to everyone you know, without ever recharging or changing a battery... awesome. Think of all those family picnics and outings you can now go to, where nobody will ask why you have to run back to the car every few hours or why you never leave it (just to pick up a few watts). Think of all the neat stuff you can bring with you on the next Field Day, or anywhere else—stuff that previously required your car's cigarette lighter jack for power.

What's in the Little Box

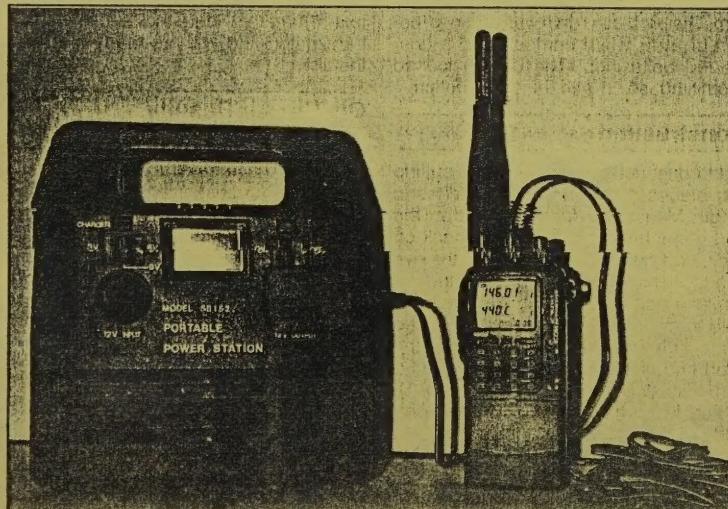
The core of the Power Station is a rechargeable lead acid gel-cell battery which produces 12 VDC at 7.0 amp-hours. The output voltage is switchable (via a front-panel slide-switch) to accommodate four operating voltages. The switch selects either 3 VDC or 6 and 9 VDC. The power take-off jack for this is located on the side of the case and is the standard variety to accept accessory power cables. There are two methods of utilizing the 12 VDC output. The first is via



The Power Station. Two rubber plugs protect the cigarette-lighter plug sockets when not in use. There's an on-off switch to the right with indicator above it. To the left is the voltage selector switch and the charge-state LED indicator is above. The voltmeter is centered.

the cigarette-lighter-type socket on the front panel (the one on the right). The second is by using the mounting studs accessible from the back panel. The cigarette-lighter socket on the left can be

used to recharge the unit from your car with the supplied plug-to-plug cable, which is 8 feet long. There is also a supplied AC adapter for charging the unit at the home QTH. The built-in voltmeter not



To get a better idea of its size, here the Power Station is being used to power an ICOM IC-W21AT by using the accessory CP-13 cigarette lighter plus noise filter plug. It really isn't that big, yet it does a big job.

THE HAM CONTACT
P.O. Box 4025, Dept CQR
Westminster, CA 92684
Telephone 714-901-0573 FAX 714-901-0573
E-MAIL N6YYO@SPRynet.COM
Orders only 800-933-4264
VISA & Mastercard accepted
Price Class \$49.95 (Plus \$10.50 S&H)

only measures the operational voltage, but can also be used to measure your car battery's voltage while you're recharging the Power Station.

If you're a voltholic and have run your car battery down to zip by not running the engine, or if cold weather has taken its toll, you can press the Power Station into service and use it to provide a quick jump-start for your car battery. It's probably a good idea and much safer to use jumper cables from the Power Station's studs to the battery terminals for this, as the cigarette-lighter connections are not rated for high-current use, such as jump starting a car. The manual states that the unit can deliver a maximum of 100 amps for roughly a minute or so.

The charging times for the Power Station will vary as to method. If you charge it at home with an AC adapter, it will take about 8 hours to fully charge. If you use the DC (cigarette-lighter cable) method in the car, it will take about 3 hours, obviously with the engine running. Don't worry; you can't overcharge the unit, as it has built-in protective circuitry that shuts off the unit when it is completely charged. There is an LED indicator on the front panel that lights when the unit needs charging and goes off when it is fully charged. It's as simple as that.

The Power Station is housed in a tough, heavy-duty plastic case and measures 7½" x 2½" x 8". There is a large carrying handle built in as part of the cabinet design. Probably you could fit some metal clips at the ends for a canvas carrying strap. Another useful addition would be to consider two items from Radio Shack, namely either their two-outlet (270-1525) or three-outlet (270-1544) DC plug adapters. This way you could power up a few things at the same time.

The literature states that you can use the Power Station to power most HTs at the 5 watt level for three to five weeks, depending on how long-winded you are. There are countless things it can be used for around the shack and home as well as in the field. Most of the uses will develop out of necessity to the point where you'll wonder how you got along before without a Power Station. In this holiday season, it also makes a great gift idea for amateur and non-amateur alike. In the short time that I've had and used it, it's gotten to the point where I think of it in the same terms as that famous credit card, and I never leave home without it.

The Power Station is priced at \$49.95 plus \$10.50 Shipping. It is available from THE HAM CONTACT, P.O. Box 4025, Westminster, CA 92647. For information call 714-901-0573 or E-Mail or order from them at N6YYO@SPRynet.COM.

